

## POLICE SERVICE AIDES: PARAPROFESSIONALS FOR POLICE

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### ABSTRACT

*Increased professionalization of U.S. police patrol forces has yielded not only higher salaries but, through heightened citizen expectations, greater pressures to provide both more crime-fighting and more call-for-service answering activities. Service calls in particular, requiring diversified skills, have added to patrol workloads. Coming at a time of severe budget constraints, alternatives must be identified and evaluated that focus police skills on police matters and provide for non-law-enforcement services in other ways. Recent experience on one promising alternative resource—police service aides—is summarized here. These paraprofessionals are unarmed but uniformed civilians in marked vehicles who perform non-crime-related activities traditionally assigned to sworn officers. Included is an analysis of their effectiveness in freeing time for sworn officers to pursue crime-fighting activities; their capacity to perform different duties; and their impact on and acceptance by the sworn officers and the community. As in other professions, the introduction of police paraprofessionals will have a major impact on urban services in general and on policing in particular.*

### BACKGROUND

The use of police service aides represents, in our opinion, a major step in the professionalization of police patrol. The patrol force, being the front-line component of a police department, has prime

responsibility for responding to calls for police service, for deterring and preventing crime, and for providing general public safety services.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, demands for police patrol services increased at rates as fast as ten percent a year while budget constraints have precluded comparable increases in the number of police officers. Yet costs of providing police service have increased markedly, up an average of 232 percent from 1959 to 1973, with police real wages climbing at a rate about twice as fast as those of the average U.S. worker (Odoni, 1977). An around-the-clock, two-officer patrol unit costs from \$120,000 to \$350,000 a year to operate, more than ninety percent of which is attributable to salaries, pensions, and fringe benefits. Patrol costs typically consume fifty to sixty percent of a police department's total costs. City outlays are likely to climb further, even without new above-average salary boosts, due to lucrative pension agreements (Fogelson, 1977), which, when they reach maturity in coming years, will further increase a city's cash disbursements and erode its financial soundness. In fact, some cities (e.g., New York City) have already hovered on the brink of bankruptcy.

Despite these budgetary problems, citizen expectations in terms of services delivered have been raised by publicity of new information-processing technologies (e.g., NCIC, 911, CAD, AVM),<sup>1</sup> higher crime rates, and probably even from television depictions of police operations. In the face of this seemingly unsolvable crisis—the demand for increased services on the one hand, and for budgetary restraint on the other—the need for alternative policing strategies is apparent.

One of these strategies is the use of police paraprofessionals or police service aides to respond to a significant portion of the calls for service that have been traditionally assigned to sworn police officers. We present here the police service aide experience of one police department—the Worcester (Massachusetts) Police Department.

### POLICE SERVICE AIDE CONCEPT

Until recently, the patrol officer has been viewed as the “general practitioner” of a police department. Just as a general practitioner in medicine does not specialize in any particular kind of medicine, the patrol officer has usually not specialized in any particular aspect of patrol. It has been customary for patrol officers both to respond to calls for service and to perform crime prevention and deterrent activities. Attention to crime fighting activities is, as a matter of course, interrupted by calls for service that occur at random times and require varying amounts of time to service. The increasingly heavy call-for-service workload makes it difficult to perform crime-fighting activities; a call-for-service can take a patrol officer anywhere in his or her command, almost always away from a location selected for crime prevention. Accompanying fatigue, associated with responding to many calls for service, has caused many officers to view time between calls for service as “rest” periods rather than crime-fighting intervals. What is worse, patrol sectors (“beats” or “routes”) that need crime-fighting attention *most* usually get it *least*, due to the high correlation between levels of crime and numbers of calls for service.

The “general practitioner” nature of patrol service extends beyond the simple mixing of crime-fighting activities and responding to calls for service. Each of these activities itself comprises an extremely diverse set of subactivities. In crime fighting, procedures used to deter and intercept car thefts are likely to be quite different from those used against purse snatchings, armed robberies, shoplifting, or barroom assaults. In responding to calls for service, it is well documented that fully eighty-five percent (typically) of a police department's calls for service are truly “service” calls that do not require special police skills and powers such as the ability to use weapons, the ability to apprehend, the power of arrest, etc. Categories of service calls range from those involving family

disputes, to sick or injured persons, to parking violations, to notification of a death in the family, to the proverbial "cat in a tree."

To solve the dual dilemma of increased and more diversified service provision on the one hand, and budgetary limitations on the other, police departments throughout the United States are moving in directions away from the "general practitioner" model of the patrol officer. These usually entail efforts at specialization, such as we have seen recently in medicine and earlier in other professions (e.g., law, teaching, and engineering). The police service aide represents a new type of police specialist whose primary responsibility is to respond to service type calls. The police service aide concept, in recognition of the fact that the majority of police calls for service do not require the specific skills and powers of sworn officers, allows the officers themselves to specialize more in crime-fighting activities. Thus, the aides are specialists in service calls and the sworn officers are thereby free to focus on crime fighting and on responding to crime-related (or potentially crime-related) calls for service. In the medical analogy, police service aides are comparable to paramedics who perform certain limited services for individuals who do not need the attention of a physician. Other professions, too, have such paraprofessionals (e.g., teachers' aides, dental hygienists, paralegal aides, apprentices, etc.). Their creation, while often motivated by cost, allows for more specialized service provision (sometimes increasing the service levels for all types of service rendered) and for an initial career step that can be used for training, observation, and probationary purposes.

## NATIONAL SCENE

The police service aide concept appears to be innovative and quite unusual in the United States. To be sure, many police departments employ unarmed civilians in various capacities, but very few are used in field operations.<sup>2</sup> In fact, in 1967, the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice recommended the creation of an unarmed civilian position, a community service officer (CSO), within police departments. This position was envisaged as the first of three ranks that would progress to police officer and then to police agent. According to the commission report, community service officers would "investigate certain minor thefts and loss of property; provide continuing assistance to families encountering domestic problems; and work with specialized police units such as a community relations unit."

Eight years later, there are very few police departments in the United States that have followed the commission's recommendations. There are many community service officer programs, but these are for the most part diluted versions of what the commission recommended. Usually, the community service officers perform nontraditional functions such as public and community relations and crime prevention, or what are perceived as menial functions such as clerical and dispatch jobs that are also sometimes carried out by police cadets.

In Worcester, several factors distinguish its police service aide program from most other "CSO" or "cadet" or "auxiliary" or "parapolice" programs in the country. In Worcester, *the aides are on patrol as well as at inside jobs; they ride alone in marked vehicles; they are dispatched directly by the central dispatcher; they handle approximately one-third of all calls for service; their ratio to total sworn officers is about one to ten; and they are an integrated part of police field operations, reporting to roll calls with officers and responding to the same police supervisors.* In short, the patrol aides have become a part of a *split-force* patrol team, responding to service-type calls, while the sworn officers have concentrated on the more serious calls and on crime-fighting activities.<sup>3</sup> Based on the criteria stated above, we are aware of only two other programs—in

Scottsdale, Arizona and in Miami, Florida—that are similar to the Worcester police service aide program.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the Scottsdale Police Department now only hires officers who have been aides (called “police assistants” in Scottsdale).

The introduction of civilians into the mainstream of police department activities has been extremely difficult. Between the issuance of the President’s Commission report (1967) and the initiation of the Worcester program (1974), several attempts to implement or institutionalize civilians in police departments in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts met with repeated failures. In the case of the Boston Police Department, the struggle lasted from 1968 to 1973, after which the entire cadet program was phased out.<sup>5</sup>

In the light of the Massachusetts experience, Worcester’s successful attempt at implementing a police service aide program in 1974 assumes an even greater significance.

### WORCESTER APPROACH

The Worcester approach to the establishment of a police service aide program in the police department differed from the abortive Boston and state attempts in five significant ways. First of all, the major impetus for the idea came from *within* the police department. One of the main architects of the plan was a deputy chief who became chief of police in 1975. This origin of the program has resulted in a strong organizational backing directly from the chief’s office, a fact that did not hold for Boston where the commissioner of police was almost openly hostile to the mayor’s idea.

Second, Worcester has a city manager–county type of government. The current city manager, having been in office for many years, used his strong position to support the police service aide program.

Third, the Worcester Regional Law Enforcement Committee planners, who actually developed the plan for the grant and who took care of the details required by the state funding process, were very knowledgeable about the internal functioning of the Worcester Police Department. The planners were well respected by the chief and other department officials. This close working relationship and mutual trust resulted in both a better coordinated plan than those offered by other Massachusetts cities for use of Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) money and a very smooth implementation.

A fourth factor was the relative noninvolvement of the police union. In the 1968–69 Boston and statewide legislative battles over the cadet programs, the Massachusetts Police Association (MPA) and the Boston Police Patrolmen’s Association (BPPA) and their local chapters played a major role in having the bills defeated. In Worcester, the local chapter of the Massachusetts Police Association was facing severe internal problems, which resulted in the ouster of the association in favor of a local chapter of the International Brotherhood of Police Officers (IBPO). The new union, meanwhile, was distracted by more immediate concerns relating to a new work schedule, pay raises, and court overtime pay. On the other hand, the president of the Worcester Massachusetts Police Association was associated with the community service officer program (under Model Cities auspices) and was not unfavorable to the idea of having civilians in the police department.

The fifth and perhaps most important factor in Worcester’s success with the introduction of the police service aide program was in the way the program was presented to police officers. The label “cadet” was carefully avoided because of the negative connotations to Massachusetts police officers. In addition, the architects of the plan presented the aides as a supplement to officers, not as replacements. To back up that position, the chief brought the department up to authorized strength by hiring some thirty-five police officers at the same time the aides were hired. Moreover, the police

service aide program was at the heart of a major Worcester Crime Impact Program, which was initially funded at an annual rate of \$750,000. The deployment of aides freed police time and let the sworn officers spend more time on police matters and to form crime-specific, patrol task forces in an impact target sector,<sup>6</sup> which is centrally located and is one of four police patrol sectors in the City of Worcester. To many officers, these new assignments were desirable. Thus, the aides were presented as both an opportunity for officers to become more professional law enforcement specialists and as a direct answer to the common police complaint that much of their time is spent on "garbage" calls, unrelated to "real" police work.

The effects of the police service aide portion of the impact program will next be discussed. However, it should be noted that the special patrol assignments made possible by the police service aide program resulted in substantially decreased targeted crime levels, particularly in the impact sector. Impact program results, as well as additional details of the police service aide program, are contained in a separately published evaluation report (Tien et al., 1975).

### JOB PERFORMANCE

In terms of job requirements, each police service aide applicant had to be between eighteen and thirty-five years old; have a high school diploma or G.E.D.; have no felony convictions; have a driver's license and a safe driving record; and be a resident of Worcester. Although forty-five police service aide candidates were initially hired by the police department in the spring of 1974, forty-one remained in the program as of June, 1975, the time of this evaluation. The average age of the forty-one was 22.5 years; 40 percent were female; 12 percent were from racial minorities; and 32 percent were married. In terms of educational level and professional backgrounds, the aides compared very closely with officers in both patrol and investigative units.

The training of the aides took eight weeks, including three weeks of on-the-job training. Although a class of officer recruits was going through training at the same time, the two groups were trained separately. It was felt that the aides should not be given as intense training as police officers so that they would not think they had the proper training to perform police-related functions of law enforcement.

On May 1, 1974, Worcester's first civilian patrol force was officially deployed in its own specially marked vehicles. *Uniformed but unarmed, and without the power of arrest, they assumed responsibility for all calls of a service nature that occurred between the hours of 10 A.M. and 2 A.M.* Out of the forty-one aides under consideration, thirty-one were assigned to patrol, six to ambulance duty, and four to communications. Unless otherwise stated, the discussions are focused on the *patrol* aides.

The following evaluation findings draw on the results of an extensive radio-call card analysis; the findings of an anonymously administered, questionnaire survey of police service aides and patrol and investigative police officers; the impressions of a limited participant observation effort; and a telephone survey of a small sample of Worcester residents.

### ROLE DEFINITION

#### *Guidelines*

A set of guidelines was published by the chief defining appropriate tasks to assign to aides on motorized patrol; they specify that aides are to assist sworn officers by replacing them on noncrime,

service calls whenever practical. While aides are not to respond to any disturbance call that could result in an arrest (e.g., felonies, fights, family disputes), they are to focus on investigating motor vehicle accidents (in cases of no serious injuries), rerouting traffic at fires, administering first aid, and investigating and taking reports of stolen and lost property, including stolen or recovered automobiles. The complete initial list of aide-type calls issued by Acting Chief of Police John T. Hanlon in March, 1974, included:

Snow Complaints	Recovered Property
Notifications (All kinds such as: death in family, children arrested by police or outside agencies, children injured, found, etc.)	Stolen and Recovered Vehicles
Assist Citizen	Missing Persons
Fire Alarms	Sick Persons
Noise Complaints	Injured Persons
Motor Vehicle Accidents	Defective Streets and Sidewalks
Animal Complaints	Automobile Obstruction
Stolen and Lost Property	Parked or Abandoned Motor Vehicles
	Children Complaints
	Rubbish Complaints

A potential danger of dividing the call-for-service response force and the call types into two nonoverlapping components is the possible assignment of the incorrect type of unit (aide or officer) to a call. In the guidelines, aides were instructed to call for a sworn officer backup whenever it was ascertained that the incident was crime related or serious enough to warrant an officer's attention. Similarly, officers were instructed to turn over lower priority, service calls to aides. When no aides were available for dispatch, their calls were to be held "for a reasonable time" rather than assigned to an officer (except, of course, in emergencies).

In general, the guidelines have remained intact. Certain guideline clarifications were issued that limited the types of calls aides could respond to, eliminating such priority calls as hit-and-run accidents, break-ins, burglary alarms, and "serious larcenies." Part of this limiting process has been to ensure the aides' safety, but part reflects a growing feeling in the police union that aides may be infringing on police tasks. Additionally, in carrying out the new dual dispatching functions, dispatchers have tended to judge ambiguous calls conservatively, assigning a sworn officer instead of a police service aide, when in doubt.

As part of the anonymously administered, questionnaire surveys, a number of questions were asked of both aides and officers about the guidelines. Noteworthy points include:

- There is general agreement that aides rarely request the assistance of police officers when it is not needed.
- Aides and officers agree that aides rarely neglect to call a police officer when they need one.
- Over 30% of patrol aides felt that officers called for aides when they should not have. Officers did not feel this was so.
- Officers and aides agree that officers rarely neglect to call an aide when they need one.

Activities

The types of service provided by aides are detailed in table 1. Surprisingly, the greatest portion of an aides' call-for-service activity (58.4%) is *crime* report taking involving stolen motor vehicles, malicious mischief, motor vehicle accidents, and larcenies. The next three largest categories of activity are transportation (17.3%), assisting citizens (9.2%) and other report taking (5.5%).

TABLE 1  
POLICE SERVICE AIDE ACTIVITIES

	<i>Percent of All Radio Calls Served by Police Service Aides</i>	
1. Crime Report Taking		58.4
Stolen motor vehicles	31.2	
Malicious mischief	11.5	
Motor vehicle accidents	10.0	
Larcenies	5.7	
2. Transportation		17.3
Intradepartmental	7.5	
Sick or injured citizens	7.3	
Found or recovered property	2.5	
3. Assist Citizens		9.2
4. Other Report Taking		5.5
Missing persons	5.0	
Animals	0.5	
5. Disorderly		2.2
6. Car Blocking		2.2
7. Notifications		2.0
8. Traffic Direction at Fires		1.5
9. Precautionary Standbys		1.0
10. Noise Disturbances		0.7
TOTAL		100.0

Both aides and officers were asked to indicate those types of police activities that they now judged suitable for aides. Of the twenty-eight activities on the questionnaire, all major activities in the guidelines were included plus more law-enforcement-oriented activities such as writing robbery reports, handling domestic disputes, getting information at crime scenes, and dispersing groups of noisy juveniles. Overall, there was surprising agreement between the two groups—aides and officers—especially for activities that were obviously service oriented or law enforcement oriented. Three significant disparities were noted, in which more than 75% of the aides thought that they should carry out the activity, but less than 38% of the officers agreed: writing larceny reports, handling past burglaries, and handling illegal parking complaints. Smaller disparities occurred for four other activities; handling victims of an unarmed robbery, handling “down-and-out” drunks, questioning rape victims, and getting information at crime scenes. Collectively, these results reveal a

general desire on the part of the aides to perform activities more related to law enforcement, but not involving in-progress crimes, and police officers wishing to limit the police service aide's role strictly to service.

### *Injuries and Accidents*

In a program incorporating uniformed, unarmed civilians into police field operations, a primary concern should be the safety of the civilian aides, the sworn police officers, and the public. This evaluation found no indication of an increased safety risk to any of these groups because of the deployment of police service aides. Of thirteen reported aide injuries during the first sixteen-month period, only six resulted in time taken off work, and only one injury (hit by car) resulted from any contact with the public. During the same period, a comparable number of officers sustained forty-four injuries, including eight while apprehending suspects, and fifteen while pursuing suspects.

These results are quite significant and highlight at least two points. First, they indicate that none of the aides' injuries could have been prevented by having them armed or protected. Citizens are not taking advantage of the unarmed and nonauthoritative status of the aides. Second, the results are additional evidence that the aides are following the job guidelines. The type and small number of injuries indicate that aides are not trying to assume police authority and are not overstepping the bounds of their authority. The absence of any job-related, disciplinary actions against the aides is another piece of evidence supporting this point.

## UNIT UTILIZATION

During the police service aide deployment period (10 A.M. to 2 A.M.), the aides were found to handle 24.7 percent of all radio calls and assist in an additional 8.2 percent of calls, making a total of 32.9 percent of all radio calls that involved aides. The service time (travel plus on-scene time) of a call did not depend on whether the call was responded to only by an aide unit, only by an officer unit, or by both types of units, with each call averaging about twenty-four minutes. Each officer-only call, however, resulted in 1.30 police officer units responding, whereas each aide-only call caused only 1.04 police service aide units to respond. Because of such multiple police officer responses (due most likely to the more serious nature of officer-only calls), aides were able to absorb only 25.4 percent (not 32.9 percent) of total service time attributable to responding to radio calls. Thus an "equal workload" allocation of aides and officers would require the fielding of one aide unit for every three officer units. However, in Worcester there was one aide unit for every two officer units, yielding a call-for-service, aide unit utilization of 19 percent, as compared with 28 percent for an officer unit. (Formally, "utilization" is defined as the percent of time over an eight-hour tour that a unit is responding to or assisting on radio calls.)

Adding together unreported committed time and meal breaks, aides had about 49 percent of their time accounted for, leaving a residual of 51 percent presumably spent in random patrolling. In comparison with sworn officers, it could be stated that the aides are being somewhat underutilized, a fact that was also substantiated by our limited participant observation findings.

## OFFICER REACTION

During observation of police officers, the officers who were favorable to the police service aide program made remarks like, "I don't know what we'd do without the PSA's." Less favorable

officers felt the aides provided some assistance by answering calls for service, but that officers could answer those calls without any detriment to patrol performance.

A special effort was made to ride with stewards and officials of the police union—the International Brotherhood of Police Officers. The union's official position was *against* the police service aide program. The major reason, according to union officials, was the feeling that fewer additional police officers would be hired by the city if aides were hired. While top union officials expressed disapproval of the program mostly in general terms of police hiring, other active union members were less one-sided. One union steward said, "To be honest, there are very good things about the police service aides program, but nobody is going to get up at a union meeting and defend the PSA's."

The questionnaire surveys gave both patrol and investigative officers an opportunity to express their opinions anonymously. In response to the question, "Do you think it is a good idea to have a Police Service Aide Program?", 69 percent of the patrol officers and 86 percent of the detectives thought that the program was a good idea. Asked to explain their responses in an open-ended question, 67 percent of those officers who answered cited approval of the program because it allowed officers more time on patrol—which is an original objective of the program.

Finally, in our conversations with and limited survey of police officials, there seemed to be a unanimous feeling that aides are effective and doing a good job. Several high-ranking officials stated that most of the current group of aides would make excellent police officers.

## CLIENT REACTION

In determining the value of the police service aide concept, the reaction of those served by aides is as important as the reaction of those who work with them since their value is not only dependent on their being able to assist and be integrated with police officers, but also on their ability to serve and

TABLE 2

### CLIENT SATISFACTION WITH SERVER\*

<i>Percentage Answering</i>	<i>Aide (N=124)</i>	<i>Officer (N=48)</i>	<i>Ambulance (N=31)</i>	<i>Officer &amp; Aide (N=18)</i>	<i>Total (N=221)</i>
Very satisfied	52	54	84	60	57
Satisfied	35	35	10	28	31
Not very satisfied	6	0	0	0	4
Dissatisfied	6	11	6	6	7
No answer	1	0	0	6	1

\*In response to the question, "Overall, how satisfied were you with the assistance you received?"

satisfy the public. To this end, a very limited telephone survey of police service aide clients was conducted to ascertain their reaction to the services provided. In addition, a small number of police officers' clients were interviewed for comparison purposes. The police officers' clients included only those who had a service-type complaint that could have been answered by an aide. While the survey was limited to only 221 residents of Worcester (representing approximately one out of every 800 residents), the results are significant in that they are not ambiguous—they reflect clear expressions of satisfaction with and acceptance of the aides (see table 2).

Questions were also asked about how well clients felt they were treated and how understanding the server was of the client's feelings. Positive responses exceeded 90 percent in all cases and *there was no significant difference in the way respondents felt about police service aide service versus police officer service*, for incidents now usually serviced by aides. Also, there appeared to be no significant dependence of the results on the sex of the server or of the respondent.

Response time is a key factor in how the public judges a police department, although it could be conjectured that quick response would not be critical for aide-type incidents. Fully 86 percent of all respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the response time, even though the median "perceived" response time was almost fifteen minutes. The respondents often commented that they did not expect the police to arrive immediately unless it was an emergency; even those who waited up to an hour in nonemergency cases were quite satisfied.

When respondents were asked how their experience with a sworn officer or police service aide affected their opinion of the Worcester Police Department, 68 percent said that it made no difference and 27 percent felt that it had raised their opinion of the department (frequently in ambulance-type incidents). And overall impressions were quite high, with 85 percent of respondents feeling that Worcester Police Department services were either good or very good, with both results again showing no significant dependence on whether an aide or an officer rendered the service.

Finally, respondents were asked whether they would prefer an officer or an aide for providing the kind of service they had received. Fully 87 percent of the aide clients either preferred or were indifferent to being served by an aide again. This contrasts with 60 percent of officer clients who preferred or were indifferent to being served by an aide, which is still quite favorable toward aides, since most officer clients were generally unfamiliar with aides. Overall, it is quite significant that 69 percent of all respondents (including those who had never seen an aide) were indifferent to being served by an officer or an aide, and, moreover, an additional 11 percent of clients actually said that they would prefer an aide.

Another indication of citizen satisfaction with police services is the number of complaints and letters of appreciation that the police department receives. Of the total of 101 complaints from citizens to the Worcester Police Department during the period June 1, 1974 to August 31, 1975, only three were against aides and none of these was found to be justified by the Worcester Police Department. In terms of letters of appreciation, the Worcester Police Department received 291 letters during the period July 5, 1974 to August 31, 1975. Of these, 47 related to police service in general; 202 commended the actions of police officers; and 42 expressed appreciation for specific aide actions. Again, it is seen that aides have contributed positively to the image of the Worcester Police Department.

## JOB SATISFACTION

The use of civilians by a police department in tasks that had previously been reserved for sworn officers presents a multitude of problems. So far, we have seen that there is no inherent reason in the structure of police departments that should preclude partial civilianization of the patrol force; that in

Worcester the police service aide program is a functional and accepted part of the department; and that the citizens of Worcester have responded well to the deployment of police service aides.

The anonymous survey results and participant observation findings indicate that police service aides are quite satisfied with their jobs. In response to the question, "Overall, how satisfied are you with police work?", fully 90 percent of the aides (independent of assignment) and 73 percent of patrol officers were either "very satisfied" or "satisfied."

A closely related issue to job satisfaction is pay. Dissatisfaction with pay is a problem common to many civilian programs in police departments (Schwartz, Vaughn, Waller, and Wholey, 1975). Low pay has frequently been a cause of attrition; on the other hand, the fact that civilian salaries are substantially lower than officer salaries is a major reason why those programs are initiated in police departments.<sup>7</sup> In Worcester, however, the civilian aide force is less dissatisfied with their pay than are the police officers. Only 46 percent of the aides are somewhat or very dissatisfied with their pay. The comparable percentage for patrol officers is 64 percent. At the time of the survey in June, 1975, aides were paid \$140 a week, while officers with less than two years' experience were making \$176.

### WORK PERCEPTIONS

The anonymous survey asked aides, in open-ended questions, to describe briefly the most and least satisfying aspects of their work. Those mentioned by at least two aides are listed in table 3, in order of frequency of responses. The service aspect was foremost among the most satisfying aspects. Of the least satisfying aspects, "taking grief from the public" is significant because it relates to lack of authority on the part of the aides. Several aides mentioned that they receive verbal abuse from adolescents who realize that the aides do not have police authority. While we witnessed minor incidents involving this issue, there have been no major problems with the public's taking advantage of the aides' limitations. The third through fifth items in table 3, under "least satisfying aspects," all relate to perceived unnecessary or unwarranted use of aides in providing transportation services.

TABLE 3

#### POLICE SERVICE AIDES' WORK PERCEPTION

<i>Most Satisfying Aspects</i>	<i>Least Satisfying Aspects</i>
1. Helping People	1. "Taking grief" from the public
2. Helping police officers	2. Having a bad work schedule
3. Investigating accidents	3. Transporting police officials
4. Training for law enforcement job	4. Being used as a "taxi service"
	5. Performing mail runs
	6. Calling for police officers

Finally, some aides felt uneasy about calling for police officers, once the aide has arrived on the scene. Apparently, sworn officers resent being “dragged into something routine,” and thus minor law violations observed by aides were often not called into the communications center.

Aides were enthusiastic in their suggestions on how to improve the program. The following listing gives, in order of frequency, all suggestions made by two or more aides.

1. Give police service aides more authority (e.g., ticket parked cars, take more reports.)
2. Improve the structure of the police service aide program.
3. Improve police service aide car lights.
4. Give police service aides credit for the police exam.
5. Give police service aides overtime pay when earned (instead of compensatory time off).
6. Screen police service aides better.
7. Make police service aide job a prerequisite to becoming a police officer.
8. Make the guidelines clearer.
9. Improve the dispatching.
10. Have better training.
11. Have police service aides ride double during busy times.
12. Expand police service aide coverage to twenty-four hours (instead of sixteen).
13. Get better officials.
14. Give police service aides Mace or nightsticks.

Despite the above-cited problems of incorporating a civilian program such as this into an established police organization, to our knowledge Worcester has been able to integrate the civilian component to a greater degree than most other U.S. police departments.

## STAFF INTERACTIONS

Many of the suggestions made by the police service aides—especially the expressed desire for organizational solidarity and recognition—stem, at least partially, from the way in which aides interact with police officers and police officials.

### *Officers*

An initial and understandable hesitancy on the part of patrol officers to accept the aides was found. As one aide put it, “I find that some police officers, once they recognize me as an individual, and they see that I’m OK, then I can work well with them. Until that point, it’s like I’m some sort of enemy that they are forced to tolerate.”

When asked, “In general, how helpful are PSA’s in providing information or suggestions for police activities?”, 68 percent of the impact sector police officers indicated that aides are “very helpful” or “helpful,” as compared with 29 percent of their counterparts in the non-impact sectors; this reflects the closer cooperation that exists among impact sector personnel—both impact sector aides and officers. This cooperation is helped by the fact that all impact sector personnel work the same two shifts (i.e., 10 A.M. to 6 P.M. and 6 P.M. to 2 A.M.), whereas the non-impact aides overlap the non-impact police officers shifts.

### *Officials*

Police officers and aides were also asked questions about their officials, since it is commonly thought that the relationship with supervisors affects job satisfaction. When asked, “Are there one or

more officials to whom you regularly talk about your job and job-related problems?''', 93 percent of all aides replied affirmatively. In general, they were very satisfied with the accessibility and attentiveness of officials, which was partly due to the concurrent workshifts of impact aides, officers, and officials.

## ASPIRATIONS

The aides were hired with no promise of job security. They are not protected by any union or association, have no social security or retirement benefits, and have no ladder for promotion that would provide better pay or more responsibility. Their principal aspiration is to become a police officer—88 percent of all aides want to become police officers. If they do not become a police officer in Worcester and, assuming that the police service aide program continues in its current form, then 44 percent of them expect to leave within two years. This would cause significant instability in the program and recruiting and training problems for the Worcester Police Department that, in two years, would have become quite dependent on police service aides.

When asked to explain why they do not have long-term commitments to the aide program, almost all aides mentioned the issues of insecurity, low pay, and not gaining any advantage toward becoming a police officer.

Despite the above-stated problems, it should be recalled that fully 90 percent of the aides are satisfied with their work. Many consider their experience training for becoming a police officer, and several have recommended that all future officers be required first to serve as aides. As one aide stated, 'I plan to make a career of police work and the PSA program is a stepping stone. Before becoming a PSA I was not positive as to whether I would want to join the Police Department. But now I know that I will like the PO's work and feel I am capable of doing their work. I am very satisfied with the PSA program. I feel that so far I have been able to be of assistance to many citizens and this gives me a lot of satisfaction. I really love the job.'

## CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In sum, the introduction of police service aides into the Worcester Police Department has been effective and has been implemented smoothly. There have been no major problems except for the key issue regarding the career and advancement potential of aides in the department. Perhaps the most significant indication of the success of the police service aide program has been the continuance of the program, which was originally started in 1974, for three years. Moreover, the City of Worcester is now assuming a major portion of the program's cost, which was initially totally borne by the Massachusetts Committee on Criminal Justice.

The Worcester experience has shown that police paraprofessionals can be introduced and integrated into an established police organization; they can handle calls for service that do not require the authority or expertise of a sworn police officer; they are accepted by the citizens who initiate the calls for service; and finally, they are effective and satisfied with their jobs. In short, the paraprofessionals can be an important and productive component of a police organization. Moreover, they can potentially be a *cost-effective* component. Although Worcester did not view the aides as a cost savings, it can be seen that aides are paid less than sworn police officers and cost less to train, equip, and maintain, while at the same time they are able to perform just as effectively as the officers in responding to service calls, which amount to a significant portion of the total calls for service.

Although the Worcester experience has been deemed a success, we do not at this time recommend a nationwide adoption of the police service aide concept. Instead, we recommend a nationwide evaluation of existing and anticipated police service aide-type programs. The evaluation should provide a sound basis for establishing standards and guidelines on police service aide training and use. Additionally, the police union's fear that the paraprofessionals may undermine their job security must be overcome. One possible guideline is to designate the police service aide position as a first step in the career ladder of a police officer. The drawback in this solution is the possible foreclosure of an opportunity for an individual to become an unarmed, but uniformed service call specialist. At any rate, careful thought must be given to the expanded use of paraprofessionals in the delivery of urban police services.

#### FOOTNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> NCIC = National Crime Information Center; 911 = three-digit emergency number being implemented throughout the United States; CAD = Computer-Assisted Dispatch; AVM = Automatic Vehicle Monitoring.
- <sup>2</sup> See, as examples, USDOJ (1975), which lists eight "cadet" or "auxiliary police" projects, of which Worcester is one; Sims (1975), which lists five "paraprofessional" police projects; and Schwartz, Vaughn, Waller and Wholey (1975).
- <sup>3</sup> Another split-force patrol experiment was recently evaluated (see Tien, Simon, and Larson, 1977).
- <sup>4</sup> Recently we learned of a police cadet program in Jackson, Michigan, sharing certain similarities with the police service aide concept (see Rice and Zavislak, 1977). The Jackson program places cadets (eighteen to twenty-one years of age) in one-man patrol units marked *Police Cadet*. Cadets respond to 12.7 percent of the total call-for-service workload, including many of the types of calls responded to by police service aides in Worcester, Scottsdale, and Miami. Another recently reported innovative use of paraprofessionals is the use of "student patrol aides" riding bicycles on the Claremont Colleges complex near Los Angeles (Howard, 1977). These student aides report potentially criminal activity to a central dispatcher who then sends vehicle-borne officers to the scene. A related program at Kent State University uses "student security aides" to act as "back up" responders to calls for service in student dormitories (Peabody, 1977).
- <sup>5</sup> During the course of the evaluation, we had access to two unpublished accounts of the Massachusetts legislative battles (Fabiano, 1969; Randall, 1978).
- <sup>6</sup> A sector in Worcester is a collection of beats, often called "command," "precinct," or "district" in other cities. A beat in Worcester is called a "route."
- <sup>7</sup> Actually, in Worcester no real cost saving was achieved, nor was it intended, since aides did not replace officers. Aides are purely supplementary to the sworn officer force. Future policy decisions, however, may well look into the police service aide program as a cost-saving factor.

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